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ABSTRACT

A study examined the content of direct mail materials, distributed by the National Organization for Women (NOW) and Stop ERA groups, favoring or opposing passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. It was expected that NOW's pieces would concentrate on counteracting or counterattacking Stop ERA's arguments against the amendment (military draft, lesbian issues, women's "privileges," and financial support) in a feminist oriented, rather militant manner that would demand equality. Conversely, it was expected that Stop ERA's pieces would center on legalistic, pro-American, state's rights arguments against the amendment in an educated "lady-like" manner that would not mention the opposition. It was expected that the NOW pieces would be negatively oriented due to deadline pressure and waning legislative favor, while Stop ERA's pieces would be optimistic, even touting, of success. Five pieces of mail for each group, sent to dues paying members during the last six months of the ratification attempt (January through June 1982) were examined. Key themes examined were argument and issue, setting, character, and action. Other content items noted were sources, references to the opposition's pleas for funds or volunteers, background, tone, and the design specifications of the letter or brochure. The results of the analysis showed that, aside from providing legislative updates and requests for financial contributions, the tactics of the two groups were quite dissimilar, and virtually opposite of the hypotheses. (HTH)

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Committee on the Status of Women

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NOW vs. Stop ERA:

Unequal Messages on the Equal Rights Amendment January - June 1982

by

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That every story has at least two sides is no news. Grade school teachers, mothers, judges, traffic cops and journalists have long demanded the dual versions as a squabble-settling method of sorting out grievances to arrive at best at the "truth" and at least at an understanding of the situation.

Indeed, historically, from the Federalists and anti-Federalists to the current dilemma over El Salvadoran involvement, we are a nation founded on the venting of opposite views.

The irony of the "two sides" situation is that each emanates from a singular topic. One set of "facts" produces "two" issues, answers or arguments. And the face-off -- for controversial cases, in particular -- most often takes place between disparate and delineated groups: right to lifers versus personal righters, hawks versus doves, atheists versus believers.

The questions at hand are these: how do these adverse factions portray their respective stances to their rank and file? Which of the joint issues are elaborated? What references are made to the opposition? What tonal qualities are conveyed?

And, ideologies aside, what if both factions are female, known novices in the socio-political lobbying and legislative spere? Does a single sex situation raise additional factors of curiosity and concern? Do females' internal communication fall prey or resort to "womanly" personality traits of

passivity, emotionalism or gossiping and show weakness on political savvy, issue orientation or dominance technique?

These questions lead to the subject of this research project: an analysis of the content of the direct mail pieces used by pro- and anti- groups on a controversial national issue.

The particulars include:

Direct mail. There are two reasons for selecting this medium: first, it allows for a more exacting examination of the unabashed views of each "side" than would be available from regular, "objective" media (newspaper, magazine or TV -- especially in this particular case, where press coverage was minimal[1]), and second, direct mail is a relatively unresearched but burgeoning medium. In 1981 alone, an estimated $20 billion was raised by religious, educational, charitable and public interest organizations through direct mail.[2]

The controversial issue. The chosen issue is the attempt to ratify the proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the United States Constitution. One year ago, the 10-year-old attempt failed, three states short of ratification but with Americans favoring the legislation two to one, according to public opinion polls.[3]

The pro- and anti- groups. The National Organization for Women and Stop ERA are the two groups most associated with each stance and recognized as most vociferous in the recent ratification battle. Although many other groups existed and contributed to both sides, NOW and Stop ERA dominated press reports, staged the bulk of the rallies, had the most members, raised the most funds and had the greatest impact on legislators.

NOW, after its formation in 1965, was the first group to voice support for the amendment. It pressured the Subcommittee on Consitituional Amendments of the Senate Judiciary Committee in May 1970 to hold the first hearings on

the amendment since 1956.[4]

Subsequent passage by the House of Representatives in 1970 -- the first action by a full House on the ERA since 1923 -- made it "glaringly apparent," according to some ERA studies, "that women's groups had finally united enough to make opposition politically dangerous and their pressure politically potent."[5] This strength, however, was pre-Phyllis Schlafly.

Schlafly, the leading opponent to the amendment, formed Stop ERA in October of 1972. "I knew from the start," she said, "that I had found enough seriously wrong with ERA to stop it, or at least stall it, for an awfully long time, if only I could get the message out." According to her biography, Schlafly "realized that if she was going to get the message out she had to jump in the battle immediately, marshal the disorganized opposition and march into the states. To the everlasting despair of ERA's confident backers, she did. . .In an era of feminism, Phyllis Schlafly, the No. 1 enemy of women's liberation, may be the one contemporary woman who has truly changed the course of history."[6]

Schlafly and Stop ERA became synonymous. In fact, any kind of opposition to the amendment and Schlafly became synonymous.

A definitive bibliography study on the amendment sums it up most succinctly: "At least one great irony has come out of the ERA debate: women themselves have been responsible for its continual failure, not male opposition. And now, in the ratification process, it is female opposition epitomized by Phyllis Schlafly's Stop ERA that is deterring passage."[7]

Proponents of the amendment say it is needed as part of the Constitution as a national policy to permanently end sex discrimination. Pro-ERAers charge current laws are full of loopholes, are subject to change and are not comprehensive enough to end unequal pay and unequal opportunities.[8]

Opponents claim the amendment will weaken the military, forcing women to be drafted and go into combat; it will result in increased federal control, giving more power to the courts and the Congress and taking it from the states; it will make family law a federal matter and take current protective privileges from women including the right to support, child support and alimony; it will prevent segregation of sex in schools and encourage abortion and divorce; it is unnecessary since current legislation and acts cover the same ground, and, the time extension for the amendment passage is illegal.[9]

The reason. The ratification controversy appears to be one of the first -- if not the first -- public and social issues to pit a female group against a female group.[10] But more, with the reintroduction of the amendment just three days after its demise, it is a two-sided controversy that has returned. Both groups will most likely return with it. How they communicated their stances the first time around is an important lesson for Round Two.

The research questions include:

What issues are covered in each faction's direct mail campaign?

How are references to the opposition handled?

What persuasive techniques -- via tone or style -- are utilized?

What ultimate similarities or differences are there in the two groups' mailings?

The project hypothesis was similarly multiple in scope: It was expected that a marked difference in style of the two groups' pieces would be found, with NOW's pieces concentrating heavily on counteracting or counterattacking Schlafly's arguments against the ERA (particularly on the draft, lesbian issues and women's "privileges" and support) in a feminist-oriented, rather militant (no nonsense) manner that would demand equality while Stop ERA's pieces would center on legalistic, pro-American, states-righters' arguments against the amendment in an educated, "ladylike" manner that would not mention the

opposition. It was also expected that NOW pieces would be negatively-oriented due to deadline pressure and waning legislation favor while Schlafly's would be optimistic, even touting, of success.

II

A variety of research on the ERA and women's rights has been conducted. Explorations into amount and type of ERA coverage in the traditional media have been conducted by several researchers,[11] as have studies on trends in coverage of social issues,[12] trends in content of women's pages and those pages' relationship with the women's movement (and hence, ERA),[13] legitimation of social movements and splinter groups, most particularly women's liberation and feminism,[14] and, history of the amendment's struggles.[15]

While not totally applicable to the study at hand, the findings of these forerunners help explain the need for internal communication within the organization as a sometimes sole means of relaying the faction's message as well as of conveying the environment out of which both factions were operating.

Two studies emerge as most relevant to the project at hand. One uncovered late in the research process is in some ways shockingly similar in scope to the proposed study. A 1981 master's thesis by Lisa Stark content analyzed four NOW and Stop ERA campaign brochures (pieces disseminated to the public, not to members) using evaluative assertion analysis to determine expressed attitudes, not the writer's intent. Stark found neither group used women or the ERA in a positive or negative manner to a significant degree, indicating, to her, a "fair" treatment of such subjects; a tendency for anti-ERA material to use stronger verbs in statements on women but not to a significant degree; anti-ERA brochures were not more biased or propagandistic than were the pro-ERA (at least not to a significant degree); that anti-ERA forces were as much "pro" women as pro-ERA forces; that anti-ERA people did not use their

position to badmouth what the ERA would or would not do, and, in general, that the sharp ideological differences in the groups were not conveyed through portrayal of women or ERA.[16]

A dissertation on the rhetoric of the ERA, a 1976 study by Sonja Kay Foss, most influenced categories for the research at hand. Foss applied the fantasy theme method to study the controversy from 1970 through 1976. Pro and con arguments on discrimination of women were analyzed. Each side's view of reality was determined via the stereotypes each had of the other and the tactics used to present each vision to the public. She formulates a theory of how rhetoric works in successful social movements and predicts the ERA will pass, but by a close margin. She also suggests each side could increase its rhetorical effectiveness by "rearranging their rhetorical visions."[17]

In another dissertation on the rhetoric of the ERA, Loretta Blahna identifies and describes the arguments generated in the ERA controversy from 1921 to 1972. Using three representative time periods, she determined "three issues that continually dominated the fifty years of Equal Rights Amendment controversy" -- the impact of the amendment on women's privileges, whether protective legislation was a necessity or a handicap, and the best means by which to secure equality. Her study found additional determining factors to the amendment's progress included "the congressional process, the timing of the idea of equal rights, the activity of key members of Congress, and tactics used by debate participants influenced the course of the amendment."[18]

A dissertation by James Stanley Lemons centers on women's quest for freedom and their perpetuation of the progressive impulse of the early 1920s. Although historical in nature, Lemons does trace the division on how to attain equal rights, an ideological difference that still poses problems.[19]

Janet Kay Boles in 1976 examined the controversy surrounding the ERA in the first four years following Congressional passage. Field research in three states focused on three models of roles in the political process: the role of interest groups, of community and state leaders and of the public output policy analysis. She found that ratification of the ERA was directly related to income, education, interparty competition, voting participation, a non-traditionalistic political culture and a history of innovative policy making. Community conflict existed in almost all non-ratifying and late-ratifying states.[20]

Related to the history of the ERA, David George Ondercin studied the women's movement from 1920 and found a major argument centered on the benefits of protective legislation (maximum hour laws, night work prohibitions and minimum wage laws, for example) versus the amendment. Behind the pro- and anti- protective legislation views were conflicting views of womanhood -- one seeing women and men as equals and the other seeing biological differences necessitating legislative differences.[21]

A recent dissertation, also historical, by Susan Louise Randall, uses Congressional documents to chart efforts by proponents and opponents from 1923 to 1960. Randall discusses the ERA as a bipartisan issue and determines women's groups to be a significant influence on politicians and legislators. Her study affirms Ondercin's work which highlights the sharp ideological division between "militant feminists" and "social feminists."[22]

Randall's and Ondercin's studies point out the main problem within the women's movement -- lack of cohesiveness. Critical to a resolution of the issue is effective communication both between the groups and between the two factions and other women. Both studies confirm that opposing views of women lurk in the debate over the passage of the ERA.

In a content analysis of belief patterns concerning the ERA, Gail C. Chadwick had an equal number of pro- and anti-ERA males and females sort fifty-two statements about the amendment. Two significant patterns of responses emerged, showing recommendations could be made for pro-ERA campaign strategies. The study also points out that the complexity of the processes of attitude formation and persuasion mean campaign strategists need to search for more effective message design and presentation.[23]

III

The Method

Direct mail pieces sent to NOW and Stop ERA members during the last six months of the radification attempt (January through June 1982) were analyzed for this project. Only correspondence sent to dues-paying members was included; educational or persuasive brochures for the general public and supplementary newsletters to dues-paying members were omitted.

The scope was narrowed in an effort to secure true organizational views on the ERA issue alone; member newsletters contained many other topics and public brochures were considered to be not as representative of true faction sentiments dur to their image-building and/or possibly propagandistic nature.

Each organization was contracted and asked for the defined pieces during the specified time period. Since each sent the requested copies, it may be assumed (and only assumed) that all pieces sent to members were indeed sent for the study.

NOW's literature included five pieces sent in four mailings: a two-part February piece and one each for April, May and June. Stop ERA's included five individual mailings: one for February, two for March and one each for May and June. (It is interesting to note that each group had one "special" piece. NOW's was a last-minute sheet added to the February piece to update

legislative court action. Stop ERA's was a second and last-minute March piece at the time of the Illinois primary election that urged a letter-sending campaign.)

Foss' fantasy themes were supplemented with issues that emerged from general reading and other studies to devise a chart of themes and categories for use in preliminary analysis of the content.

Key themes were Argumentative and Issue, Setting, Character and Action. Other content items noted were Sources, References to Opposition, Pleas (for funds or volunteers), Background, Tone and Specifications. Particular categories for each theme follow:

Argumentative/Issue

Time is running out
Constitutionality/Legality of the amendment or current action
Equality/equal pay/equal rights
Federal vs. state control
Women's privileges
Drafting of women
Protective labor laws
Legal chaos
Adequacy of existing laws
Support/alimony/child support
Privacy
People favor "our position"

Setting

The world
Grassroots level
Woman on a pedestal
Woman in the home
Woman in "horrible places"

Character

Capable contributors
Ladies
Representative of all women
Oppressors
Ignorant novices
Dirty campaigners

Libbers
Professional/executive women
"Real" women and dependents
Wife/mother
Problem-laden deviants
Supporter of un-American ideals
Liberals

Action

Strategy
Struggling against oppression for equality
Breaking sex role stereotypes
Working to defend tradition
ERA passed too hastily
Organizing the forces
Take situation/opposition to court; election action

Sources

Consititution
Bible
Legislators
Supreme/Federal courts
Existing legislation
Newspapers/Public opinion polls

Opposition

By name
Anonymous
Counterattack
Tell what opposition is doing

Pleas

Funding
Volunteers

Background

Legislative to date
History of amendment
History of group's efforts
Current legislative action

Tone

Positive
Negative

Specifications

Number of pages
Number of words
Piece theme
Number of colors
Funding procedure

Individual pieces were read by organization (all NOW, then all Stop ERA) and examined for mention of or reference to any or all of the themes. Positive notation was made per piece, not per mention.

After examining each group's pieces, additional "categories" in the form of accumulated statements or quotes surfaced including "guilt-producing" statements and "positive" statements. These were noted along with particular quotes made regarding the opposition and quoted pleas for funding. Clumping such quotes together by "type" -- and their later comparison -- provided a more penetrating and comparative look into the pieces than was possible via a mere mathematical tabulation of theme references.

After individual study by group, the pieces were compared side by side by month to determine similarities and differences in issue coverage. Differences in production style and individual piece theme were also compared and noted.

IV

The Findings

If the research hypothesis were rewritten in reverse of its present form, it would more closely approximate the findings of this brief foray into membership direct mail pieces.

As was expected, NOW's and Stop ERA's pieces were very different in nature and content. But not the difference that was hypothesized. Aside from providing legislative updates and requesting financial contributions, the tactics of the two were quite dissimilar and virtually opposite of the suppositions.

Contrary to beginning beliefs, NOW did not counterattack Schlafly's most popular anti-ERA arguments and Stop ERA was not written in a ladylike style. NOW was not militant and Stop ERA did not center on legalistic arguments. NOW did not demand equality and Stop ERA did not ignore the opposition. And, last but not least, NOW was not negative and Stop ERA was not smugly positive.

Instead, an analysis of the content revealed, in brief form here, the following:

> NOW dwelt very little on the opposition; Stop ERA discussed it in almost every piece, both lambasting the opponents and indicating their plans or intent.
>
> NOW engaged heavily in fund-raising, utilizing a form of "guilt"-producing messages; Stop ERA was much more casual in its money requests and while it, too, used some "guilt" techniques, it did so to a lesser degree.
>
> NOW's pieces were positive in overall tone, projecting a real chance of winning the battle through ratification in the necessary states; Stop ERA's only positive tendencies were through the negative comments it made about the opposition. Instead it invoked a wary approach that did not speak of victory other than in providing information on the planned "Over the Rainbow" dinner at the ratification deadline.
>
> NOW dwelt heavily on upcoming strategy, providing clear details of plans and procedures in what appears to be an attempt to put members on the inside track; Stop ERA was sketchy on plans or strategy and provided few details.
>
> NOW's tone was professional yet personal, geared to the individual member; Stop ERA's, also geared to members, was more personal, bordering on folksy or chatty.
>
> NOW asked for specific amounts of money ($250-$100-$50,etc.); Stop ERA left a blank to fill in the amount being sent and instead asked only for "your most generous contribution."
>
> NOW's pieces each tended to cover a basic topic or issue and were conceived under a different theme per piece ("personal" letter, telegram, memo, etc.) with each piece asking for funds for a different cause; Stop ERA's were more like mini newsletters, covering multiple topics within the on-going format.

> NOW asked for no personal involvement other than sending money; Stop ERA twice asked members to participate in letter-sending campaigns.

In general, NOW's pieces were "slicker" than Stop ERA's, primarily because each utilized a different approach or theme. The original February piece was a "letter" on what appeared to be Eleanor Smeal's (then president of NOW) personal letterhead. The "special" attached to it as a last-minute update was a yellow "flash bulletin." April's piece was on Political Action Campaign letterhead. May's was tagged and constructed as a memo; June's was a telegram-like "Priority Message." The Stop ERA pieces were identical each month with the exception of color added to the last two mailings.

These format maneuvers can be looked at in two ways: (1) similarity breeds consistency, continuity and sameness, or (2) innovative per piece can provide newness, an urgency and awareness or can create confusion about different problems, strategies and funds. A little of each appeared to be at work for both. NOW's pieces provoke new interest and yet create some confusion on the part of the member/reader as to funds, campaigns, action. Stop ERA's are pleasant familiar but could therefore appear to be so similar as not to be newsworthy.

As stated earlier, a key similarity to both groups' pieces was that each updated members on current conditions and legislation, particularly in state ratification battles; each provided little to no substantiation for their claims of public favorability of positions and each asked for funds to continue the fight, both using some "guilt"-producing sentiments to prompt remittance.

The fact that each group updated members on current conditions is perhaps the most important finding since it indicates that both were targeted

on the same issues. If one had provided legislative update while the other merely told what the amendment would do (or not do), the battle would have been fought on different fronts. As it was, the fronts were essentially the same, a finding which tends to counter public thoughts on the stances of the two.

The following category chart (Table 1) compares the pieces on the preliminary theme dimensions:

Table 1 about here

Argumentative/Issues: Virtually none of the issues identified by Foss or the others were covered in these membership pieces with the exception of "time is running out," which both groups utilized from their particular perspective (NOW, the work must continue; Stop ERA, "we're almost finished with this 10-year hassle"). The only other two to surface with any strength were the constitutionality/legality of the amendment or current action, which Stop ERA used, and the claim that "people favor our position" (i.e., "we are gaining momentum"), which NOW conveyed.

A breakdown of individual issue content per piece shows:

	NOW	Stop ERA
February	-Callister appeal (strategy to be used to fight) -Request for funds for above	-Callister appeal -State update: Oklahoma, Illinois (3/5 rule), Georgia -Chance to order Schlafly biography
March (Stop ERA) April (NOW)	-Political Action Campaign Fund (PAC)	-Brief legislative update -AFL-CIO siding with pro-ERAers -Women's Educat'l Equity Act -Secret TV/Radio contracts -Textbooks and morality
May	(Urgent Memo) -Battle far from over: rallies, Countdown Campaign, cost of media -State update	-Brief legislative update -Comments on pro-ERA media -Celebration dinner plans -Motherhood song lyrics

	NOW	Stop ERA
June	(Priority Message--telegram) -Update on unratified states that are to meet, need money to fund those fights	-Comments on pro-ERA media coverage -NOW's strategy outlined (PAC) -3 requests: pray, draft flyers, & -Biased Harris opinion poll
Special flyer	-Oklahoma and Callister developments; funds	-Request to send letters to legislators against changing Ill. 3/5 majority rule -Dirty opponent tricks

A comparison of comments on the Callister decision (a District Court decision that held that the extension for ratification of the ERA was illegal) shows how the two groups informed their members on the same topic:

NOW: (From the February last-minute update)

"The Supreme Court unanimously stayed Judge Callister's decision and agreed to hear our appeal. The stay of the Callister decision legally stops it from having any effect and is an encouraging victory in this long court fight. Our next papers in the case are due to be filed before the Supreme Court March 11."

(From the original February piece)

"The decision at this time is not binding and cannot stop action in the state legislatures, but it does throw the process into confusion and aids the opposition."
"In fact, we believe that the timing of this decision could be viewed as political, because it is on the eve of the legislatures convening for the last session before June 30, 1982 deadline. We believe our opposition hopes that the decision cannot be appealed in time, and that it will intimidate and confuse state legislators acting positively for the amendment."
"That is why we must move instantly to the Supreme Court. We must show that the Court has jurisdiction on these matters and that this single judge, who recently was a high-ranking leader in the Mormon Church, a leading opponent of the ERA and ERA extension and an advocate of rescission, does not have the last word." (These quotes are not all the material presented.)

Stop ERA:

"Meanwhile, N.O.W. took the ERA Extension-Rescission lawsuit to the U.S. Supreme Court, demanding that the Court IMMEDIATELY reverse or vacate the District Court decision (the one by Judge Callister holding that extension was illegal and that

> rescission is legal). Briefs calling for immediate action to vacate (declare null and void) the Callister ruling were filed by 22 liberal Governors, Speaker Tip O'Neill and many liberal Congressmen, 46 liberal organizations, the American Bar Association, and the Department of Justice. They all lost; the Supreme Court did not grant their motion. The Supreme Court agreed to hear the case, but in its own good time (which apparently will not be until after June 30)." "The Supreme Court 'stayed' Judge Callister's ruling in the meantime, but, in the words of the Wall Street Journal, 'politically, that doesn't change the fact that the only court to consider the matter has ruled that extension of the deadline was unconstitutional.' That's right. And Judge Callister's 81-page opinion is so powerful and persuasive that it is hard to see how any reasonable person or Court could come to any different conclusion."

Setting: Both groups set their stances and action at the grassroots level, presumably because the bulk of the messages dealt with state ratification attempts.

Character: Few of the identified characterization themes were utilized by either group, but of the two, Stop ERA consistently referred to "dirty campaigners" and "libbers" with veiled references to "problem-laden deviants" and one upholding their own "mother" image. NOW referred to dirty campaigners in its beginning pieces, to oppressors once (in reference to legislators) and saw its own members as representative of all women in the first piece (this one dealt mainly with proposed legal action on the Callister decision). Use of characterization themes corresponds directly to Stop ERA's name-calling and attempts to denegrate or smear the opposition.

Action: As mentioned in the overview, Stop ERA's pieces tended to be vague and unspecific on plans, goals or action of the group, hence, it earned only one mention in this arena (in its "special" piece calling for specific action and relaying its hoped-for consequences).

NOW, perhaps to combat its popular press image of disorganization, shared strategy plans in four of the five pieces and was particularly specific in

terms of its plans to use the media (including the cost of advertising). Four of the pieces also referred to "organizing the forces" by indicating current work as well as upcoming plans. Only NOW discussed possible legal or electoral strategies (its entire PAC push is to unseat anti-ERA legislators).

In general, NOW's pieces were more action-oriented and urgency-building and conveyed a vigorous, confidence-inspiring, planned approach. Schlafly's pieces, in contrast, appeared to be "let's-keep-in-touch-and-let-me-tell-you-what-they've-done-now" chats. From the direct mail, one wouldn't guess or know that Schlafly is an attorney and party activist who has successfully staged a variety of media events over the course of the ratification battle. She comes across as a middleclass housewife who happens to be fed up on the particular issue.

Sources: It was originally thought that Stop ERA pieces would heavily quote the Bible and the Constitution. They didn't to a particularly strong degree. (Schlafly closed one of her pieces with "May God bless you for your help" and in another asked for prayers as part of her action plan to combat ERA ratification.) Both groups cited legislators (primarily governors) as sources of information in impending votes and both used newspaper coverage or opinion polls. But again, sources were not utilized to a strong degree as a basis for fact. In fact, substantiation for both groups was weak. The key source for each group was its own head, who also originated the pieces (or appeared to have done so).

Opposition: Perhaps the most startling finding to this researcher was in references to opposition. At the end of the ratification fight, feminists and NOW members lamented that pro-ERAers spent too much time disputing Schlafly's draft/abortion/single-toilet contentions and therefore were not able to truly

explain the "real" issues. While this might have been the case in the popular press, where Smeal or other ERA advocates were asked to comment on a Schlafly charge, it was not the case in the membership direct mail.

In the examined pieces, NOW referred to the opposition in only the first two pieces and did so by way of including additional information on the legislative dilemma at hand ("those opposed to ERA thought we'd leave after the Oklahoma defeat but they're wrong,"), not in smear form. For NOW, legislators tended to be the main opponent.

Stop ERA, on the other hand, engaged in mud-slinging and namecalling and in every piece told what the opposition (generally tagged "libbers") was doing, playing up the "dirty tricks" aspect.

This fundamental difference in the pieces contributes greatly to the overall tone of the pieces -- leaving NOW with a more "professional" approach and Schlafly with her more chatty, "gossipy" approach that belied the reputed organization behind the organization.

Opposition quotes. . .selected examples

NOW: "I am convinced that the legislators are running scared of the far Right Wing. They fear that a vote for ERA means they will be targeted by a very powerful and monied political force. . . .The opposition is engaging in smear tactics and fear tactics that we cannot run away from. Anyone who opposes them is called anti-God, anti-religious or immoral."

"We cannot let the far Right Wing out-organize us and wipe out the gains for women of the last 15 years."

Statements supporting the idea that the real opposition are politicians and legislators:

". . .those politicians who think that the women's movement is somehow going to turn into a pumpkin after the ERA deadline."

"I want NOW to show the politicians once and for all that we are capable of rewarding our friends and punishing our enemies."

"The New Right, the Moral Majority, Phyllis Schlafly, and the other forces of reaction have mounted massive campaigns to defeat those legislators who have indicated public support for the ERA."

"I am not a vindictive person by nature. But, we've been lied to, talked down to, and insulted so much by a handful of reactionary legislators that the dignity of the women's movement for rights simply requires that these holdovers from another age be defeated." (Originally underscored.)

". . .To target the most blatant, bigoted opponents of women's rights and replace them with elected officials who know what human dignity means."

Stop ERA: "The ERAers then worked frantically for the next five days using all the political muscle and media pressure they could muster. . ."

"We are hearing a lot today about 'book censorship.' Sweetheart of the Silent Majority is the most censored book in America. The liberals and the women's libbers have managed to make it unavailable in most bookstores and libraries. . ."

". . .the women's libbers nagged the AFL-CIO to join the NOW boycott of unratified states."

". . .the expiration date for the crooked time extension so as to force Illinois to vote on ERA one year more than every other state in the country."

Regarding the Women's Educational Equity Act Program:
"The sole purpose of WEEA is to give the women's libbers access to the taxpayers' money, so that they can pursue the special-interest, unisex goals on our money."

". . .leftwing bias of the media"

"When the ERAers couldn't get 38 states to ratify. . .they manipulated a time extension of three years, three months, eight days, seven hours and 35 minutes. . .They chose that particular period in order to coincide with the last day of the Illinois legislature on June 30, 1982. In order to get the time extension, they got Congress to change the rules and abandon the two-thirds rule in Article V of the U.S. Constitution."

"Now the same ERA proponents who played tricks with the rules of the U.S. Constitution want to play tricks with our Illinois state constitution."

"Media events and even 'non-events' are reported on TV, radio and the press as though they were real news. These reporters ought to wake up and realize that they are being used by the ERAers as fundraisers for the pro-ERA, pro-lesbian, pro-abortion and anti-Reagan goals."

Pleas: Both groups asked for money but NOW was much more definitive about it, providing a range of contribution amounts and simplifying donations by

accepting VISA and Mastercard in order to finance the fight for equality.

Schlafly, on the other hand, left a blank to be filled in with a personal amount and was generally much less forceful. She almost used an "oh yes, by the way" approach. The key difference in the funding pleas was that NOW made each request for a seemingly different reason, first to fight the Callister decision, then to fund its PAC campaigns, next to defray cost of media, etc. Different names for each fund were used on the return coupons. This strategy evidently was an attempt to nullify the members'a ability to say "I already gave" by providing a new cause or reason to donate. Schlafly consistently asked for funds simply to keep ERA from being passed.

An interesting quirk to the funding pleas was Schlafly's March offer of "a tube of Phyllis Schlafly's camphor ice for chapped lips, hands and feet" to all contributors of $25 or more. This incentive conveyed a homey, motherly touch to the otherwise troublesome task of asking for money and in its own way counterbalanced NOW's hard-reality of accepting credit cards. In another piece, Stop ERA's contribution coupon contained room in which to order copies of the Schlafly biography Sweetheart of the Silent Majority.

Funding quotes. . .selected examples

NOW: ". . .we are digging in -- organizing a political force that ultimately cannot be denied. But it takes money -- lots of it."

* "In the past month, determined supporters of ERA have sent jewelry and stock certificates to help us continue the fight, and still others have called with financial pledges that I know are sacrificial."

"The financial commitment and sacrifices from supporters has been overwhelming. Yet, once again, I need to ask for more. At this crisis point in the campaign, we now must step up the Countdown Campaign more than ever before."

"I have directed our staff to launch the most intensive fund-raising drive we have ever made. . .I want to have at least one million dollars on hand within the next 90 days to enter the critical state campaigns."

"I want to show the politicians once and for all that we are capable of rewarding our friends and punishing our enemies. And I believe you feel the same way. That's why I'm urgently asking for your help."

* "P.S. When you realize the narrow margin of votes -- 2, 3 or 4 -- on which passage of the ERA depends, you can see why it's so important to give as generously as you can to the NOW/ERA/PAC Campaign Fund."

  "I'm urging you and every member of NOW to make a special contribution of $1 a day between now and ratification deadline. One dollar a day -- that's $60 between now and June 30th -- can can make all the difference between winning and losing."

* "I realize that for many this is an enormous sacrifice. But, it pales in comparison to the sacrifice that is being made by those who have given up their jobs, left their homes, and moved to the unratified states to help in this final push."

Stop ERA: Regarding the book order: "I believe you will want to order 100 or 200 books immediately."

* "Dear friend, we are in the last stretch of this Stop ERA battle. We need your help as never before. The pressure and the work of the Stop ERA battle is worse now than at any time in the 10 years we have been fighting. Please don't let us down now. Send your most generous contribution. . ."

  On a coupon for a monthly payment amount dedication: "I will send $_____ each month until ERA finally is buried on June 30."

  On a regular donation coupon: "Yes, I want you to do everything necessary to see that ERA dies forever on June 30. Enclosed is my maximum contribution of $___."

  "With YOUR prayers, your continued financial support and your volunteer help, we will achieve final victory."

  "We need to do so many expensive things in these final critical weeks. Please send your contribution now."

* "Send us your most generous contribution to help with the heavy expenses of the final months. You have been so generous to our cause in the past, it would be a terrible tragedy if we lost in the last few weeks due to a lack of essential funds."

*Indicates quotes considered by the researcher to be of the "guilt"-producing type.

Background: Both groups backgrounded their comments or concerns only with current legislative or court activity. The other categories again mainly refer to complaints lodged about press coverage in the traditional media and on

reflection are not necessary for members who would likely be aware of such background.

Overall tone: "Positive" and "negative" categories were not originally defined. Instead, the researcher looked for indications that victory for the group in question appeared likely or that something positive (from their viewpoint) had occurred. While two of the three NOW pieces held both positive and negative comments, Stop ERA's contained virtually no strictly positive statements and imparted a positive flavor only through negative discussions of the opposition.

It was expected that NOW's pieces would tend to be more "negative" because of a lack of time and a seeming shortage of votes. It was also thought that the same set of circumstances would cause jubilation and hints at sure victory in the Stop ERA camp. Exactly the reverse was found. Surprising at first, in retrospect, these tonal conveyances make sense on both parts: if NOW imparted negative images, members wouldn't give to a losing cause; however, if NOW continued to say victory was possible "only if you give," the members could be persuaded to continue funding. Stop ERA, likewise, would lose funds if victory seemed too sure and hence needed to keep up the front that "you can never be too sure" and "let's keep up the fight and hold those libbers at bay."

Tone quotes. . .selected examples

NOW: "I wish you could have been with me at the NOW Action Center the day we received the decision. People from all over the country called to offer help, support, and to urge us to continue the fight."

"What are the chances of victory at the highest court level? I believe they are excellent. Virtually every lawyer I have talked to feels that the Idaho judge produced an opinion without legal precedent, without legal basis, and so over-reaching that most describe it as 'extreme.'"

"But increasing support for the ERA in the public opinion polls and in state legislatures clearly shows we're too close to victory to simply quit and walk away."

"Our head counts show that we are within just 2, 3 and in some states, four votes of winning passage of ERA."

May: "One thing is absolutely certain: the battle is far from over. Recent political developments in key unratified states and a massive expression of concern have changed the climate in our favor."

"These final days are our finest hours."

"I wouldn't be asking you to take this extra step (another plea for funds) if I felt we did not have a chance. But we have a very real chance."

From the June mailing: "Recent developments suggest good news. The governor of Florida will call a special session. . .the governor of North Carolina is leading the fight in his state to ratify ERA. All necessary procedural hurdles in North Carolina have been cleared to bring the vote before the legislature in early June. . .in Illinois it now appears that ERA is a critical part of the 1982 political season. A massive effort is underway to break the three-fifths rule and pressure is steadily mounting on Gov. Thompson."

Stop ERA: "ERA suffered three fatal blows during January, as NOW and ERAers waged their last-ditch effort to breathe life into the amendment."

"We were able to stop them once more."

"Thank you, valiant Stop ERAers and Eagles, for your perserverance in defeating ERA against tremendous odds."

Regarding Schlafly's announcement of "secret" TV and radio contracts: ". . .an exclusive. . .it has been a sensation. . . it is the kind of original, important information you can get nowhere else."

"Take heart. . .our battle is nearly over."

V

The Summary

When the quotes are in, the categories are counted, the references are logged and the studies are compared, there remains a nagging sensation that something about the findings of this study doesn't quite make sense.

It's not that there are two distinct and disparate sides. That, after all, is not news. Or that such factions would be unequivocally different in presentation. That was to be expected, even if it was expected differently. And it's not a problem that the preliminary hypothesis was unsupported. That does

happen and in fact tends to make the research more exciting.

The differences in suppositions and findings are actually quite sensible in the end, upon reflection. Each group, after all, targeted its message to its target audience, which, as usual, was quite different from one another.

And even beyond some of the quirkier findings -- that Schlafly would devote 50%, 25%, 50%, 25% and 90% of each piece to discussing the opposition instead of the situation or that she included the words to a pop song entitled "I've Never Been Me" about a "woman who's done a lot of 'sleeping around' lamenting her empty life because she doesn't have a baby" as "giving a powerful warning to the housewife who thinks she's discontented at home: 'it costs too much to be free'" or even that she included prayer as one of three methods for killing the ERA -- the truly unsettling problem is that the side that appeared to take a more mature, professional, rational, informative and positive approach would have its cause "bested" by one that dwelt on a nyah-nyah name-calling approach.

What it appears to boil down to -- and without implication that Stop ERA was the "winning" direct mail approach simply because the amendment was indeed stopped -- is that perhaps, on the national level, an approach of "they're doing this to you" (Stop ERA) roused more attention and ultimate action -- and perhaps even passion -- than one that said "we'll do this to them" (NOW). Perhaps the former approach -- name calling and all -- is more <u>real</u>. More identifiable with how we really feel about the "other side." We tend, after all, to be titillated by that of which we are afraid.

* * *

The difficulty in assessing the situation or drawing inferences from the findings is in trying to steer clear of selecting a "winner" or attempting

to gauge which campaign was "successful."

What, after all, is a measure of success in this case? There is no proof that the Stop ERA membership pieces urged Stop ERA members to do anything that ultimately led to the amendment's defeat. Or that Schlafly herself actually earned that honor. And there is no evidence that the NOW pieces were unsuccessful. On the contrary, NOW raised approximately $1 million per month during the final six months of the campaign. Either it did something right or it luckily struck extremely responsive donor chords.

Perhaps the researcher's malcontent stems from the fact that the faction that cried "dirty campaign" seemed to be the dirtier of the campaigners and the victor to whom went the spoils. Or that the faction whose pieces appeared more informative earned a public reputation of being disorganized novices unable to counter one lady who dressed in pink and sported a bouffant hairdo. The gossip-prone Schlafly, on the other hand, was pictured as a true "lady" with a cool ability to provide instant and fact-packed answers that stifled most opponents.

Perhaps what should be asked is whether the public faces of each group mask a quite different private personality -- whether NOW appeared organized and yet wasn't at the grassroots level where it counted most or whether Schlafly's writings belied her real action and organization.

* * *

Perhaps NOW's cool professionalism worked against it by not getting its members worked up -- by not fueling members to go out and either spread the word or denounce the spread of Schlafly's words. Perhaps they should have encouraged more active participation, which might have evoked a more involved, feeling among members.

* * *

Both groups created a sense of urgency with their pieces, but Schlafly's slightly negative approach perhaps made her message more urgent and again, more real. We tend to run faster and harder (and with more conviction) away from something bad than toward something inherently good.

* * *

Because the pieces did not discuss the why's and why not's of the amendment but only its current stance, this study does not concur or even tend to connect with any of the studies previously cited due to a lack of defined arguments in this project and the fact most other studies monitored the public media.

Stark's study of NOW and Stop ERA pieces in particular does not square with this research (in fact, quite the opposite tends to be noted in terms of "fairness" and representation) but is understandable given the different nature and purposes of the public and membership pieces. Stark's literature was geared toward education and support; this study's was aimed at news provision and fund-raising.

This study, then, offers a new handful of facts to the body of ERA knowledge.

VI

Implications

Missing from this study is the additional hard data and methodology from which more genuine inferences could be derived. One key piece of information is the amount of dollars generated from these direct mail pieces -- and, a comparison of money earned by these pieces versus funds raised by the same organization at a different time or with a different technique. Such information would allow for some comparisons of "success" between the two if more were known about audience demo- and psychographics so that variables could be considered.

And while the researcher is comfortable with the basic components of direct mail in general, it would be helpful to gain insight into the intricacies and particulars of direct mail fundraising from the money angle. This aspect undoubtedly utilizes different principles and applications, particularly in attitude adjustment of the audiece and benefit conveyance.

Last but not least, in-depth interviews with Smeal and Schlafly could doubtless provide a wealth of insight into the objectives, goals and strategy employed in creating these pieces, feedback they received and a general understanding of theleadership from which the organization follows. Attempts at reaching the two were fruitless.[24]

In addition, it would be interesting to trace the evolution of each group's peices from 1973 to the present, plus the pieces of Round Two.

* * *

FOOTNOTES

[1]See Monica Morris, "Newspaper and the New Feminists: Black Out as Social Control?" Journalism Quarterly 50 (Spring 1973): pp. 37-42 and Michael Ryan and Dorothea Owen, "A Content Analysis of Metropolitan Newspaper Coverage of Social Issues." Journalism Quarterly 53 (Winter 1976): pp. 634-640.

[2]Direct Marketing Educational Foundation, Inc. 1983 Student Summer Internship Program brochure, p. 3.

[3]"Women Will Continue Fight For Equality," Indianapolis Star, 1 July 1982, p. 21.

[4]Equal Rights Amendment Project. The Equal Rights Amendment: A Bibliographic Study. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976), p. xv.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Carol Felsenthal, The Sweetheart of the Silent Majority: The Biography of Phyllis Schlafly. (New York: Doubleday, 1981), p. xx, p. 7.

[7]Equal Rights Amendment Project, p. xvii.

[8]National Organization for Women, "ERA Yes," pamphlet.

[9]Barbara Grizzuti Harrison, "The Woman Who Is Fighting The Law That Most Women Want," McCalls, April 1982, p. 101-102 and Felsenthal.

[10]Two women's groups were involved in the suffrage issue, but there, the question was not whether the vote should be obtained, but how and the true opposition was male. Women's participation in abolitionism, child labor reform, abortion and other social causes have generally been as satellites to men's groups or in opposition to men's groups.

[11]See Butler and Paisley, "Equal Rights Coverage in Magazines, Summer 1976" in Journalism Quarterly 55 (Winter 1978): pp. 157-160; Jennie Farley, "Women's Magazines and the Equal Rights Amendment: Friend or Foe?" in Journal of Communication (Winter 1978): pp. 187-192; Mary Jarrard, "Emerging ERA Patterns in Editorials in Southern Daily Newspapers" in Journalism Quarterly 57 (1980): pp. 606-611.

[12]See Ray Funkhouser, "Trends in Media Coverage of the Issues of the '60's" in Journalism Quarterly 50 (Autumn 1973): pp. 533-538 and Ryan and Owen.

[13]See Zena Beth Guenin, "Women's Pages in American Newspapers: Missing Out on Contemporary Content?" in Journalism Quarterly 52 (Spring 1975): pp. 66-69.

[14]See Morris.

[15]Susan Louise Randall, "A Legislative History of the Equal Rights Amendment, 1923-1960" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Utah, 1979), Dissertation Abstracts International (1979), p. 4719-A; James Stanley Lemons, "The New Woman in the

FOOTNOTES - Continued

New Era: The Woman Movement From the Great War to the Great Depression," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Missouri, Columbia, 1967), Dissertation Abstracts International; and, David George Ondercin, "The Compleat Woman: The Equal Rights Amendment and Perceptions of Womanhood, 1920-1972," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1973), Dissertation Abstracts International.

[16]Lisa C. Stark, "A Content Analysis of Pro and Anti ERA Campaign Brochures Using Evaluative Assertion Analysis," (M.A. thesis, Ball State University, 1981).

[17]Sonja Kay Foss, "A Fantasy Theme Analysis of the Rhetoric of the Debate in the Equal Rights Amendment, 1970-1976: A Theory of the Rhetoric of Social Movements" (Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1976), Dissertation Abstracts International (1976), p. 3982-A.

[18]Loretta J. Blahna, "The Rhetoric of the Equal Rights Amendment" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Kansas, 1973), Dissertation Abstracts International (1973), p. 7909-A.

[19]Lemons.

[20]Janet Kay Boles, "The Coalescence of Controversy: Conditions Surrounding Ratification of the Proposed Equal Rights Amendment" (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin, 1976), Dissertation Abstracts International, p. 7935-A.

[21]Ondercin.

[22]Randall.

[23]Gail C. Chadwick, "The ERA: An Analysis of Belief Patterns," Journalism Abstracts 18 (1978): 42.

[24]A summary section on this study would be incomplete without mention of the problems encountered in obtaining the NOW pieces. When first contacted early in the academic semester, the NOW person at headquarters in charge of media affairs said they would be able to accommodate my request for pieces. The plan was for me to put in writing exactly the dates I wanted to span plus my intentions. I did that. I received no word back from NOW. Some 10 long-distance phone calls over a two-and-a-half-week period, all requesting my original source and all leaving a request for a callback, went unanswered. Unable after three weeks and a second written letter to reach anyone at national headquarters, I started contacting local and state NOW officials for help. Finally a terse letter arrived in the mail: because the pieces were member pieces I couldn't have access. I had made it clear from the beginning that I was a NOW member and had been for several years. I continued to contact national officers and succeeded in getting the dilemma before the governing board for some kind of vote on whether the stuff should be released. They finally decided -- on submission of another letter by me on my plans -- that they could accommodate me. The elapsed time on getting the pieces was three months.

FOOTNOTES - Continued

(In contrast, one call to Stop ERA offices did the trick; the package of materials was postmarked the next day and arrived two days later. I must admit I had expected the reverse -- that she would balk and that somehow NOW would eagerly comply.)

The extreme lack of professional courtesy to ERA research and to one of its own members, the confusion and several-times aboutface exhibited by NOW must be considered as possible symptoms of a deeper organizational disease. The problems -- confirmed in several interim phone calls to non-NOW but national women's group leaders -- appear to be confirmation of some of the weaknesses cited about women's groups and woman's entry into a hard-ball world of male legislators.

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In Addition to Cited Footnotes

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TABLE 1

Content Themes Found in a Comparison of the Direct Mail Pieces of NOW and Stop ERA; Number of Pieces Containing Themes

CONTENT THEMES	NOW	Stop ERA
Argumentative/Issue		
Time is running out	4	3
Constitutionality/legality of the amendment or current action	2	4
Equality/equal pay/equal rights	2	0
Drafting of women	0	1
Legal chaos	1	1
People favor "our" position	4	1
Setting		
Grassroots	5	5
Character		
Capable contributors	1	0
Representative of all women	1	0
Oppressors	1	0
Dirty campaigners	3	5
Libbers	0	5
Wife/mother	0	1
Problem-laden deviants	0	2
Action		
Strategy	4	1
Struggling against oppression for equality	3	0
Organizing forces	4	1
Take to court; election action	3	0
Sources		
Constitution	0	2
Legislators	2	4
Supreme/Federal courts	2	1
Existing legislation	3	1
Newspaper/opinion poll	4	2
Opposition		
By name	1	4
Anonymous	3	1
Tell what opposition is doing	3	5
Pleas		
Funding	5	4
Volunteers	1	3
Background		
Current legislative action	4	4
Tone		
Positive	4	3
Negative	1	4